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Very Damaging Evidence Given in the Connell Murder Trial.

SEVERAL SAW HIM SHOOT

The Men Who Witnessed the Cowardly Murder at Centerville July 5 Tell the Court What They Know.

BUTTE, Nov. 17.—The introduction of testimony in the trial of William Coombs for the murder of Jerry Connell at Centerville on the night of the Fourth of July was begun in Judge Speer's court this morning. Owing to the illness of County Attorney Wines, E. S. Booth conducted the prosecution, assisted by M. E. Lannon, George Haldorn and O. M. Hall appeared for the defendant. Howard Paschal was one of Coombs' attorneys, but was also prevented from appearing by serious illness.

Before making his opening statement to the jury, Mr. Booth filed an affidavit showing that he had not been able until yesterday to learn the name of the liveryman and the driver who owned the horse and buggy that took Coombs out of the city the morning after the murder. He asked permission of the court to call Liveryman Langlois and George Love, the hack driver, as witnesses in the case, which was granted.

Mr. Booth then told the jury that the evidence would show that about 2 o'clock on the morning of July 5, Jerry Connell and four companions were going from Butte to their home on Pacific street, Centerville. The men had been drinking and were singing. When they reached a point nearly in front of Richards' saloon near Center street, in front of Richards' saloon stood a crowd, and one among them told the four men to shut up. Connell peered that they could not make him shut up and walked on. They had not proceeded far when some one called out from the crowd, "If you'll come back we'll make you shut up." Connell started back, but had only gone a few steps when two shots were fired from the crowd, one of which took effect, and Connell said, "Well, you've got me." It was so dark that his companions could not recognize the man who did the shooting, but another man who came by about that time, recognized Coombs as the man who fired the fatal shot, and another man standing on the other side of the street also recognized Coombs. Coombs then left the crowd, and the next heard of him he was arrested in Great Falls and brought back to Butte.

Mr. Booth said he would show that soon after the shooting a relative of young Coombs went to the livery stable of Charles Langlois and hired a team with which Coombs was taken to Basin where he took the train for Great Falls. Mr. Booth said if the state proved all these facts he expected a verdict that would vindicate the law.

Daniel Connell was the first witness called by the prosecution. He said he was one of Jerry Connell's companions at the time of the murder. He said they were all somewhat intoxicated and Jerry Connell was singing. When they got in front of Richards' saloon some one cried out: "Shut up," to which Jerry Connell replied: "I don't have to." He then

walked on about 80 feet when some one called to him to come back, and he turned and walked back a short distance. The witness said some one in the crowd and Jerry Connell passed some remarks which he did not understand.

"I said to Jerry: 'Look out,' and then some one shot and Jerry jumped back and said: 'You have made it all right, partner.'"

The witness said there was some talking going on between Jerry and the man who shot him before the shots were fired, but all he could understand was that the man called Jerry an "Irish — — —" and Jerry said "I am not." The man then told Jerry to come into the saloon and Jerry replied that he would not for they would lock him up.

"When you turned back with Jerry did you recognize any one in the crowd?" asked Mr. Booth.

"I did." "Who did you recognize?" "Young Coombs." "What did he do?" "He fired the shot."

"In what direction did he fire?" "Straight north."

"Was that the shot that hit Jerry Connell?" "Yes, sir."

"What did Coombs do then?" "He walked back into the crowd and fired again."

The witness said he assisted Jerry Connell to his room on East Pacific street. The latter part of the way they had to carry him. The defendant was ordered to stand up and the witness said he was the same man who fired the shots. At that time Coombs wore a dark suit of clothes and a dark hat. There was an electric light some distance up the street and the light from the saloons in the vicinity shed enough light into the street so that the witness could see Coombs.

On cross-examination by Mr. Haldorn the witness insisted that he was not drunk at night and said he had not had more than a dozen glasses of beer. Jerry, however, was slightly intoxicated. There were about eight or 12 men in the crowd with Coombs, but the only other man the witness noticed was a tall man with a light complexion and with a reddish mustache. Mr. Haldorn wanted the witness to describe the color of Coombs' eyes, but the court sustained an objection to the line of questioning.

"Is it not a fact," asked Mr. Haldorn, "that within an hour after Jerry Connell was shot Dan Noonan took Joseph Richards to his bedside and Jerry said that was the man who shot him?"

An objection to the question was sustained.

Tom Connell was the next witness. He also was with Jerry Connell at the time of the shooting. When they came in front of Joe Richards' saloon some one yelled out, "Shut up, you Irish — — —"

Jerry replied, "If you'll come out here you'll not say that." The witness was standing near Jerry Connell. There were some more remarks passed between him and the crowd and then a shot was fired from the left of the witness. The latter looked in the direction from whence the shot came and saw William Coombs, the defendant, with a revolver in his hand. Coombs then fired the second shot while the witness was looking at him.

He said there was no doubt about the identity of the person who did the shooting. After the first shot Jerry exclaimed: "In shot," and then walked about 150 feet up the street before he fell. His companions carried him home.

On cross-examination Mr. Haldorn used a transcript of the testimony taken at the preliminary trial for the purpose of impeaching the witness. The preliminary testimony had been taken by a notoriously incompetent stenographer, and Mr. Booth objected to the use of the transcript on the ground that it had not been shown that the transcript had been read to the witness or that he had signed it as correct.

The court overruled the objection and

Mr. Haldorn read from the transcript several statements alleged to have been made by the witness at the preliminary trial contradictory of what he testified to today. In answer to further questions the witness said there were a number of small pine trees set up in front of Richards' saloon, but they did not interfere much with the light. He also denied that the electric light on the street was out that night.

Mr. Haldorn wanted an objection, and the court told Mr. Haldorn there should be a limit to his methods of questioning, and when the witness said he did not recognize any one else that should end it.

The witness said Coombs wore a dark felt hat, and Mr. Haldorn read from his transcript that at the preliminary trial he said Coombs wore a hard, black hat. The witness denied making that statement at the preliminary hearing. He said he saw Coombs with a gun in his hand.

"Do you recognize the defendant as that man?" asked Mr. Lannon on redirect.

"Yes, that is the man," pointing at Coombs.

James McGreevy was the next witness and he testified that he was in Centerville, standing in front of Mullin's house, in company with a number of others, at the time of the shooting. He saw the Connell crowd come up street and stop in front of Richards' saloon. They had some words with a crowd in front of the saloon and then a shot was fired and Jerry Connell cried, "I'm shot." Then there was another shot fired.

"Who fired the shot?" asked Mr. Lannon.

"William Coombs," replied the witness. "Did you see him fire the shot?" "How far were you from him at the time?" "About 50 feet."

The witness said he did not know Jerry Connell. He said there were at least 15 men in the crowd with Coombs, but the only other man the witness recognized was Maurice Lennihan.

On cross-examination Mr. Haldorn asked the witness if he had been drinking that night.

"I was never drunk in my life," replied McGreevy.

"How long had you known Coombs before this affair?" "About three years."

"Did you hear Coombs say anything at the time of the shooting?" "After he fired the shots he said, 'I'll allow no — — — to insult me.'"

McGreevy said Coombs wore a light coat but could not say what was the color of the remainder of his clothes, and Mr. Haldorn exhibited a light, check coat, which Coombs wore on that night and the witness said that was the kind of a coat he wore.

Mr. Haldorn again tried to compel the witness to tell what was the color of the eyes, eye-brows and mustache of the man who did the shooting, but he could not tell and when Mr. Haldorn pressed the questions the court sustained an objection. The witness said he did not know that Coombs had a vest on.

"Did you see anything on him that looked like this?" asked Mr. Haldorn, exhibiting a vest.

"Mr. Haldorn," said the court, "we all know what that is, and the witness has stated that he did not see a vest on this man. The witness will not answer the question."

Patrick Lyons testified that he was with Jerry Connell all day on the Fourth of July. They left town about 1:30 o'clock in the morning and were going home to Centerville. When they got in front of Richards' saloon, some one said, "Shut up, you Irish — — —"

party kept on up the street and Jerry said to the man who told him to shut up: "If you'll come out here you won't talk that way. When you get a man into a saloon you are pretty good men."

"We walked on," said Lyons, "and then a man stepped out from the crowd and said: 'If you'll come back here I'll shut you up.' Jerry started back and the man pulled a gun out of his pocket and Jerry started to come back, but the man fired and Jerry said 'I'm shot.' The man then fired again."

"Do you know who that man was?" asked Attorney Lannon.

"I did not know him at that time, but that is the man," said the witness, pointing at the defendant. "It was William Coombs."

On cross-examination Lyons said he recognized a man named Lambertson in the crowd with Coombs. He said there was sufficient light in the street so that he could recognize the man who fired the shot. He stood about four feet out from the crowd.

Mr. Haldorn again used his transcript to show that Lyons testified at the preliminary trial that Coombs wore black clothes and a hard dark hat.

"I said nothing like that," said the witness. "He wore a dark hat and dark clothes."

After the shooting Coombs walked back toward the saloon and Connell walked up the street about 50 feet and fell on his face. His friends then carried him home and Lyons came down to Butte after an officer and returned with Officer McNichols, to whom he described the man who did the shooting, and the officer arrested Joe Richards.

When he arrested Mr. Richards did you tell him that was not the man?" asked Mr. Haldorn.

"No, sir. Mr. McNichols asked Richards to open his saloon and he refused, and McNichols arrested him for that. He asked me if that was the man who did the shooting, and I said it was a man about his size and that I could recognize him if I saw him again."

During the cross-examination the usual little occurred between the attorneys, and the court had to call them to order and stop them from making a scene. Maurice Lennihan was a damaging witness for the defense. He said he stood within eight or ten feet of Coombs and saw him fire two shots at some one in the street and saw him snap his revolver the third time.

"I did not know who he was shooting at, but found out afterwards that it was Jerry Connell. I did not know Connell before that night."

Lennihan said he was coming up street and arrived on the scene of the shooting just as Coombs pulled his gun. He had been acquainted with Coombs about eight years. Lennihan said he told Deputy Sheriff Coombs, an uncle of the defendant, that the latter did the shooting. The deputy sheriff lives in Centerville and arrived on the scene soon after the shots were fired. He did not arrest young Coombs.

On cross-examination Mr. Haldorn read some more contradictory statements from his alleged transcript, and Lennihan denied making them. He said he thought Coombs wore a light hat and a light suit of clothes.

John Quilty, the next witness, testified that he came up to Centerville from Butte just a short time before the shooting and stopped to talk with some men in front of Riley's saloon, across the street from Richards' place. A crowd of men came out of the saloon and crossed the street and tried to get into a saloon, but could not get in and they returned to Richards'.

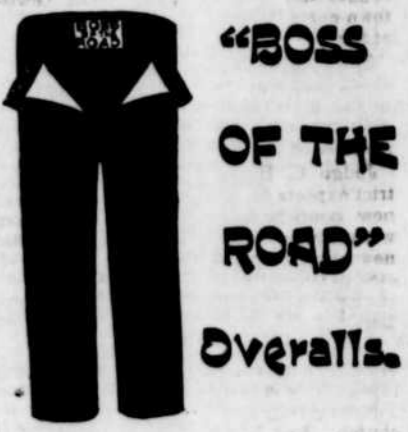
Then a crowd came up the street and the next thing he noticed was the shooting. He saw the man who fired the shots.

"Who was the man?" "Billy Coombs."

"How long have you known Mr. Coombs?"

shots stood some distance in front of them. The attorneys made such remarkable progress in examining witnesses that they surprised themselves, a fact upon which the court congratulated them, and at the conclusion of Riley's testimony the court adjourned until Monday morning. It is probable that the state's testimony will be concluded by Monday evening.

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